

The invention claimed is:

1. A process for making a value-added fruit product comprising:  
providing brined cherries;  
freezing the cherries in water for about 12 to about 72 hours;  
rinsing the cherries to remove sulfur to less than 50 ppm; and  
infusing the brined cherries with to from about 45 Brix to about 55 Brix using an infusion bath comprising cherry juice.
2. The process of claim 1, wherein the temperature of the cherry juice is from about 70°F to about 120°F.
3. The process of claim 2, wherein the cherry juice comprises a red tart cherry juice.
4. The process of claim 3 further comprising the step of drying the cherries.
5. The process of claim 4, wherein the product produced by the process comprises less than about 10 ppm sulfur.
6. The process of claim 1, wherein the product produced by the process comprises less than about 10 ppm sulfur.
7. The process of claim 1 further comprising the step of drying the cherries.
8. The process of claim 5, wherein the cherries formed by the process comprise a moisture content of from about 9% to about 15%.
9. The process of claim 7, wherein the cherries formed by the process comprise a moisture content of from about 9% to about 15%.

10. The process of claim 8, wherein the cherries formed by the process comprise a water activity of from about 0.4 to about 0.6.

11. The process of claim 9, wherein the cherries formed by the process comprise a water activity of from about 0.4 to about 0.6.

12. The process of claim 1, wherein the process is completed in about one week or less.

13. The process of claim 10, wherein the process is completed in about one week or less.

14. The process of claim 11, wherein the process is completed in about one week or less.

15. The value-added fruit product produced according to the process of claim 1.

16. The value-added fruit product produced according to claim 14.

17. A process for making a value-added fruit product comprising the steps of:  
providing brined cherries;  
freezing the cherries in a water bath for from about 12 to about 72 hours;  
rinsing the cherries to remove sulfur to less than about 50 ppm;  
coloring and infusing the cherries using a bath, comprising of a red cabbage juice extract and caramel color dissolved in a corn syrup;  
stabilizing the cherries by increasing the Brix of the cherries to not greater than about 52 Brix by adding a combination of corn syrup and lemon juice to the bath;  
pasteurizing the cherries by heating and then cooling the cherries;  
adding a flavorant to the liquid bath as the cherries cool during pasteurization;  
separating the cherries from the liquid bath; and  
freezing the cherries.

18. The process of claim 17, wherein the flavorant comprises a natural black sweet cherry flavor.

19. The process of claim 18, wherein the cherries are pasteurized to a controlled temperature of from about 180°F to about 200°F and subsequently cooled to a temperature of from about 80°F to about 90°F.

20. The process of claim 19, wherein the natural black sweet cherry flavorant is added to the liquid bath while the liquid bath is cooling after pasteurization when the temperature of the liquid bath is not more than about 110°F.

21. A process for making a value-added fruit product comprising the steps of:  
providing brined cherries;  
freezing the cherries for about 12 to about 72 hours to soften the firm tissue of the brined cherries, wherein the freezing temperature is less than or equal to 0°F;  
rinsing the cherries to remove sulfur to less than about 50 ppm, wherein rinsing comprises soaking the cherries in cold water until the sulfur content of the cherries is less than 50 ppm;  
and infusing the brined cherries with red tart cherry juice to from about 45 to about 70 Brix, wherein infusing comprises;

soaking the cherries for about 2 hours in a first infusion juice comprising a Brix of about 68;

separating the cherries from the first infusion juice and soaking the cherries for about 4 hours in a second infusion juice comprising a Brix of about 68;

separating the cherries from the second infusion juice; and drying the cherries for about 2 hours at a temperature of about 180°F.

22. The process of claim 21, wherein freezing the cherries comprises freezing the cherries in water.

23. A process for making a value-added fruit product comprising the steps of:

providing brined cherries, wherein the cherries are frozen;  
optionally freezing the cherries for about 12 to about 72 hours to soften the firm tissue of the brined cherries;  
rinsing the cherries in water to remove sulfur to less than about 50 ppm;  
coloring and infusing the cherries with a composition comprising a combination of from about 1% to about 7% of red cabbage juice extract and caramel color, based on the weight of the cherries, dissolved in high fructose corn syrup by placing the cherries and the composition together to form a first bath;  
stabilizing the cherries by adding a stabilization syrup comprising a combination of from about 50 to about 80 Brix high fructose corn syrup and about 1% lemon juice, based on the weight of the cherries to the first bath thereby forming a second bath;  
pasteurizing the cherries by heating the cherries to about 180°F to about 200°F and then cooling the cherries to at least about 100°F;  
adding about 3% natural black sweet cherry flavor, based on the weight of the cherries;  
separating the cherries from the second bath; and  
measuring the sulfur content to confirm less than about 10 ppm sulfur in the processed cherries.

24. The process of claim 23 further comprising the step of freezing the processed cherries.

25. The process of claim 23, wherein the cherries are frozen in water prior to coloring and infusing the cherries.

26. The process of claim 23, wherein the brined cherries comprise brined cherries chosen from the group comprising single bleached whole cherries, double bleached whole cherries, and single bleached sliced cherries, double bleached sliced cherries, or mixtures thereof.